

## **CLAIMS**

1. A method for distribution and installation of computer programs across an  
5 enterprise, comprising the steps of:

storing characteristics of users and user machines on a database;

imaging at least one computer program at a location remote from said user  
machines;

10 imaging said characteristics of users and user machines for said at least one  
computer program at a location remote from said user machines;

downloading to at least one specified destination user machine at least one  
imaged computer program and corresponding characteristics of users and user  
machines for both said imaged computer program and said specified destination  
user machine, wherein downloading is accomplished via a download medium, and  
15 wherein an installation utility for said imaged computer program accompanies said  
download medium;

installing said computer program from said download medium at said  
destination user machine, wherein said installation is accomplished by said  
installation utility; and

20 auto-configuring said computer program for said destination user machine in  
accordance with said corresponding characteristics of users and user machines.

2. In an enterprise, an apparatus for remote installation of a computer program from  
one or more central locations, comprising:

25 a central server;

a plurality of remote user machines;

wherein said remote machines and said server are communicatively coupled via a network;

a computer program distribution and installation medium comprising an image of said computer program and user/user machine information; and

5 an installation utility for installing said computer program from said distribution and installation medium at a destination user machine;

wherein said installation utility auto-configures said computer program for said destination user machine in accordance with said user/user machine information.

10 3. The apparatus of Claim 2, further comprising:

a database for storing said user/user machine information; and

a browser for accessing said database and locating an appropriate software image for a particular user machine.

15 4. The apparatus of Claim 2, further comprising:

a database for receiving and storing installation specific information.

5. The apparatus of Claim 4, further comprising:

20 a user access utility for inputting user/user machine information to said database.

6. The apparatus of Claim 2, wherein said medium automates replacing an operating system on a user machine.

25 7. The apparatus of Claim 7, further comprising:

an access facility by which a user can select deployment of any of a required operating system for said user's machine and applications for said machine.

8. The apparatus of Claim 2, said medium comprising:

5 a boot disk for computer program installation on said user's machine.

9. The apparatus of Claim 8, wherein said boot disk comprises a physical disk that is delivered by a physical delivery mechanism.

10 10. The apparatus of Claim 8, wherein said boot disk comprises:

a Linux-based installation mechanism.

11. The apparatus of Claim 8, wherein said boot disk comprises:

a virtual disk.

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12. The apparatus of Claim 8, wherein said medium comprises:

a plurality of boot disks.

13. The apparatus of Claim 12, wherein said plurality of boot disks comprise:

20 both of virtual and physical disks.

14. The apparatus of Claim 2, wherein said image comprises any of:

both of a computer program and customization information from a database;  
and

25 a computer program, wherein customization information is obtained from said database via said network as part of a computer program installation.

15. The apparatus of Claim 2, further comprising:

a configuration database, remote to said users, comprising characteristics of users and/or user machines, which characteristics are used to customize one or more computer programs as part of computer program installation on one or more of said user machines.

16. The apparatus of Claim 2, further comprising:

an image database for maintaining an image of each computer program remote from said users/user machines.

17. The apparatus of Claim 16, further comprising:

an access utility for accessing an image from within said image database to configure said computer programs for a particular user and/or user machine.

18. A computer readable medium, said medium storing computer code comprising:

an image of a computer program; and

an image of user/user machine information from a configuration database for customization of said computer program for a destination machine.

19. The medium of Claim 18, further comprising computer code comprising:

an installation utility for installing and customizing said computer program from said medium at said destination machine.

20. In an enterprise, an apparatus for installing and customizing a computer program on a user machine, comprising:

a medium comprising an image of a computer program;  
user/user machine information from a configuration database for  
customization of said computer program for a destination machine; and  
a facility for installing said computer program at said destination machine and  
5 for automatically configuring said program using said user/machine information.

21. A method for distribution and custom installation of computer programs across  
an enterprise, comprising the steps of:

gathering information about a destination machine;  
10 querying said destination machine for machine related information;  
if said destination machine already has a record in a configuration database,  
recording any changes to machine information to a machine record in said database;  
after updating said database as necessary, querying a user for deployment of  
a computer program image;  
15 once said user has chosen an image to deploy, creating answer files based  
on information that said user entered, as well as a type of image that said user  
choose;  
delivering said image; and  
writing said answer files.

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22. The method of Claim 21, further comprising the step of:

providing a Web portal for user management and searching of said database.

23. In an enterprise, a method for custom installation of a computer program in a  
25 destination machine, comprising the steps of:

inserting a boot disk into a drive of a destination machine;

said machine booting to boot code contained on said boot disk;  
displaying to a user a menu while a boot process continues;  
said boot process contacting an imaging server, identifying scripts that may  
be required for said installation, and initializing an installation utility;  
5       once initialization is complete, running at least one boot scrip for any of  
establishing network connectivity, acquiring an IP address, mounting drives;  
running at least one shell script;  
once a shell script begin running, running at least one imaging script, as well  
as other commands that are part of said installation;  
10       running a script to access a database for destination machine information that  
is used for customization during said installation, wherein said information is  
optionally displayed to said user for confirmation of its validity;  
gathering information for said database concerning said destination machine  
and writing said information to said database;  
15       writing image files, as customized, to said destination machine's hard drive;  
and  
rebooting said destination machine.